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AUTHOR Jenkins, Jeanne Kohl

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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author discusses how the principals of the public schools of Los Angeles are dealing with their role changes with regard to decisionmaking since the introduction of mandatory school-community advisory councils in each school. All principals involved in the study made use of, to varying degrees, manipulative strategies to influence advisory council members concerning the role of principal as legitimate decisionmaker and/or the degree and nature of council involvement in decisionmaking. Although the principal is an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the advisory council, most principals were found to be heavily involved in the planning of council meeting agendas, and a majority were also found to dominate council meetings. Data suggests that differences in impression management techniques by different principals may be explained by the presence of such conditions as the level of community and council support for the principal, socioeconomic status of the community, leadership ability of the council chairman, cohesiveness of the council itself, career contingencies, and the personality and the leadership style of the principal. (Author/DN)

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IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT: RESPONSES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS

Presented by

Jeanne Kohl Jenkins

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education*

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*Currently at the Department of Sociology, California State University at Long Beach

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT: RESPONSES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS

Principals of public schools in Los Angeles have recently been faced with modification of their traditional role as a result of administrative decentralization of the Los Angeles Unified School District. This paper discusses how the principals deal with a particular aspect of this modification, namely, the changes in their role with regard to making decisions.[1]

Data gathering concerning this question was conducted under the direction of Drs. Jay D. Scribner and David O'Shea of the Graduate School of Education, UCLA during July 1972 to September 1973. This research was part of a larger research project involved with studying the decentralization and community control movements in the school district.

Under the form of decentralization adopted by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) policy-making remains

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[1]Decision-making in organizations involves authority. Definitions of authority differ, but usually take into account Weber's (1947:324) definition that authority involves "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons." Issuing commands involves making certain decisions. Principals are part of the hierarchical authority structure of the school district and, as trained professionals, are expected to make and be responsible for certain organizational decisions, rather than solely obey commands of hierarchical superiors.

in the hands of the central School Board. To assist principals in their responsibility of implementing the Board's policies, school-community advisory councils--composed of parents, community members, school staff and, in secondary schools, students--have been mandated by the Board for each school.[1] At the same time, principals have been given increased autonomy with regard to decision-making at their schools. Though now having greater latitude in making certain decisions, such as budget allocations, the presence of advisory councils presents a potential source of challenge to the principals which was formerly non-existent, and to which they must adjust.

Fantini (1970) discusses the movement for community participation in decision-making as analogous to struggles for client involvement in decision-making in the anti-poverty and welfare programs. What is happening, in effect, is that the traditional service institution is being confronted with an externally imposed innovation--client or lay participation in organizational decision-making.

This lay participation provides a potential challenge to the authority structure within the organization (Cooley, 1927). Traditionally, organizations, particularly professional

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[1]This action was taken by the School Board as a response to pending legislative action to decentralize the school district.

organizations,[1] have resisted outside intervention, especially with regards to decision-making (Gross, 1964). Professional persons within organizations believe that they have greater competence in making decisions than have lay persons and consequently attempt to resist lay involvement.

Several urban public school districts have recently been faced with efforts to involve the public in policy formulation through "community control." Community control, as usually understood, consists of the involvement of a school-community lay advisory council--composed of citizens in local school attendance areas--in decision-making with regard to policy formulation, with implementation left to the school staff (Boocock, 1972; Koerner, 1968; Janowitz, 1969; Levin, 1970; Lisser, 1970; Scribner and O'Shea, 1972). School-community advisory groups--whether in the form of a local school board, as in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district of New York City, having as one of its responsibilities the hiring of a local administrator, or in the form of an advisory council, with very limited responsibilities--can thus be considered as parallel to lay advisory groups to other service organizations.

As is the case of other organizations, the principal--as the representative administrator and the person for-

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[1]Those with professionals in the authority hierarchy, e.g., hospitals, schools, and colleges.

mally responsible for his institution--has to take account of lay advice or contend with potential conflict. In effect, the School Board has been able to deflect to the local school principal the demands and complaints of which it had previously been the target. Now it is frequently he who must respond to the local community, rather than the Board (Mann, 1972). Therefore, much of the success or failure of the advisory councils, and consequently the movement toward greater local involvement in the schools, depends upon the principal.

Adjustment by the principals is not made easier by the fact that the School Board's Guidelines for advisory councils have been considered by many principals and council members as ambiguous[1] with regard to the extent to which councils are purely "advisory"[2] or have a legitimate role in

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[1]As discussed in the 1972 Board Report, An Evaluation of School-Community Advisory Councils, and as reported by Jack McCurdy of the Los Angeles Times (September 27, 1972). The School Board moved in October, 1972 to clarify the ambiguous statement of roles. One key section of the recommended clarification states that the principal "remains responsible for decisions which are necessary to the administration and supervision of the school" and that the council duties are involved with "participating in the decision-making process through involvement in the assessment of education needs, the planning of the educational program, the definition of goals, and the evaluation of the school and its academic effectiveness." From interviews with principals and advisory council members, the ambiguity remains.

[2]Gross (1964:122) discusses advisers: "The adviser as adviser mainly helps a unit or organization use the resources it already has. Therefore, as adviser, he does not provide assistance or support in carrying out the advice that has been given."

formalizing decisions.

The ambiguity of understanding regarding the role of advisory councils presents a potential for conflict[1] between the principal and the council at any given school if mutual expectations for involvement[2] in decision-making differ. Given the mandatory nature of advisory councils and the apparent intent[3] of the Board that these entities become institutionalized in an orderly way, principals are likely to want harmonious, rather than conflictful, relationships with them. To avoid conflict, the principal may have to manipulate council members in order to retain control over decision-making while not affronting the feelings of council members anxious that their views be influential in guiding the activities of the school.

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[1]Conflict is defined here as a disruption of social unity.

[2]See Gross (1964). Fantini (1970:51) distinguishes between two forms of involvement--participation and control. Participation refers to reform of the school districts through some degree of "meaningful" involvement in decision-making. When participation is "thwarted or obstructed," demands for control may arise in which efforts are made to achieve a "totally separate structure over which the community exercises essentially autonomous control." Involvement, thus, can be seen as on a continuum--ranging from a small degree of participation (meaningful) in effecting decisions (in this case, an advisory participation) to complete control (making the decision exclusively).

[3]The genuineness of this intent has been questioned by many. See McCurdy (September 27, 1972) and as found in preliminary interviews with advisory council members and community representatives.

The principal may attempt to tactfully discourage involvement by the advisory council in decision-making. By doing so, he, most likely, would present himself as the competent, trained, and legal authority. However, depending on the circumstances, such as if the council members do not react favorably, this action may lead to a conflictful and potentially professionally tenuous situation for the principal.

Therefore, the principal may instead attempt to influence the council members' understanding or perception of the real nature of their involvement in decision-making. While it is actually he who retains the authority to make decisions with regard to important matters, the council members may be led to believe that they are sufficiently involved in making the decisions, so that a semblance of order is maintained. Mann (1972) in his study of principal-advisory council relations, discusses this "false harmony" in which agreement on particular topics may be forced by one side or the other and is consequently superficial rather than substantive and is concerned with trivial, rather than significant, matters.

From data gathered from interviews with principals and council members, both of these possibilities--discouraging involvement and influencing impressions--were found to exist as behaviors exhibited by principals in their relations with their advisory councils. In some instances, a combination of these behaviors was found to exist; that is, that a given

principal engages in both tactics.

Impression Management

As the formation of advisory councils is fairly recent,[1] institutional mechanisms to assist the principal in his dilemma have not yet been developed. Therefore, the principal is in the tenuous position of having individually to define his relationship with his advisory council and to provide his own devices for handling the situation.

Becker (1962) discusses the parallel problem of teachers maintaining their authority in the face of potential challenge from parents. Teachers can be considered as functionaries of service institutions whereas parents can be considered as clients.[2] Becker reports that in most service institutions there is a tendency for clients to disagree with the authority system set up by the institutional functionaries, specifically, with regard to the clients' position in the authority system. In order for the teachers to ensure stability in their work setting and in relations with parents,

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[1]The School Board mandated advisory councils to begin at all schools by February 1972.

[2]Becker defines functionaries as "those who do the work of the institution" and clients as "those for whom the work is done" (p. 298). Service institutions are those that provide some service to the lay public.

they feel they must maintain their definitions of their authority over the parents' definitions of theirs and the teachers' authority.

Goffman (1959) suggests ways for people to handle problems in their relations with others. Human beings may be considered as social actors or performers who manufacture impressions of themselves for the benefit of the audience (the other human beings with whom they interact), so as to create a character, or a figure whose characteristics are invoked by their manufacturing of impressions (p. 252).

During their interactions, they give a performance on "all the activity ... on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p. 15). The other participants are either the audience, observers, or co-participants.

The performer, in his performance, attempts to project and sustain a desired definition of the situation for the benefit of the audience. The individual is, thus, a performer--a manipulator, a manufacturer of impressions--as well as a character--the figure whose characteristics are invoked by the manufacturing of impressions (p. 252; Santayana, 1922). This is not to say that the projected impression is always a false one, nor that the performer is always aware that he is projecting his own desired impressions to others. It is expected that a continuum of performance belief exists--ranging from a sincere conviction

to a cynicism (pp. 18-21).

While the individual may have various objectives and related motives, it is in his interest to control the others' responsive treatments of him and thereby avoid trouble for himself. This is accomplished by influencing how the others define the situation. In defining a situation, while individuals typically make assumptions or have stereotyped expectations based on knowledge of an individual's occupation or position in the social structure, they at times have to acquire information based on indirect evidence--through impressions they receive from the individual's verbal or behavioral expressions. In other words, inferences are made through social interaction.

Typically, audiences' impressions are based more on the expressions given off by the conduct of the performer rather than expressions given by his verbal assertions. Non-verbal conduct is usually assumed to be less governable and more spontaneous than is verbal communication.

Therefore, the performer can influence the audience's impressions of him by presenting his conduct in such a way as to give the audience members the particular impression of him that he intends for them to have. How he presents himself to the audience involves "impression management."

A principal, as a performer, may thus affect impressions that the advisory council members develop of him and also of their own involvement in decision-making vis a vis

the principal. They may believe they are involved to the extent the principal wants them to believe they are, rather than to the extent they are in fact involved.

While Goffman presents a detailed account of techniques of impression management, at this time we will briefly discuss only those considered germane to this research. They are:

1. Dramaturgical Loyalty: develops a high degree of in-group solidarity within the team;
2. Dramaturgical Discipline: maintains self-control and suppresses spontaneous or emotional responses; manages face and voice effectively;
3. Dramaturgical Circumspection: carefully plans the performance, prepares in advance for any latent disruptions; and seizes any remaining opportunities, by:
   a. Choosing loyal and disciplined team-members,
   b. Attempting to select a cooperative audience,
   c. Limiting the size of his team and of the audience,
   d. Staging an elaborate, awesome presentation or ceremony, a "mystification," so as to avoid a presentation of facts and to present himself as the competent professional,
   e. Limiting the temporal length of the performance and consequently the amount of interac-

tion,

f. Controlling the audience's access to information sources external to the interaction,

g. Controlling the audience's access to information sources internal to the interaction,

h. Controlling the agenda before the event,

i. Designating certain minor tasks to persons showing a regard for their status;

4. Misrepresentation: creates false impressions through inuendos and crucial omissions without actually lying.

Through the use of these devices, a principal may influence the impressions that the advisory council members have not only of him, but also of themselves, specifically of their involvement in decision-making. For example, they may be led to believe by his actions that he is accepting their recommendations to him, while in fact he is not.

Related Theory and Findings

Political leaders also use manipulative devices to placate their publics so as to avoid challenges to their decision-making authority (Edelman, 1967; Etzioni, 1972). Politicians will not be reelected if their publics do not believe they are being adequately represented. To prevent this from occurring, the politician may use such devices as "tokenism," "speech-making," "commissioneering," or he can

help pass symbolic laws to "mesmerize" the public. These devices contribute to the performance of a ritual of public service which creates an illusion of cooperative behavior (Etzioni, 1972). Devices for presenting symbolic cooperativeness appear related to Goffman's techniques used in impression management as they both involve projecting a desired definition of the situation on the part of the audience, or public.

Dale Mann (1972), in his study of public school principals' relationships with their advisory councils, found cases of "authentic community involvement" and "symbolic community involvement." The nature of the involvement depended upon the principal's response to the advisory council. If the principal successfully satisfied the parents that theirs was a real involvement, whether or not it was real, in fact, there was no problem for him. However, if the parents "thought he was giving them 'a song and dance,' (they) became mistrustful and remained hostile" (p. 37). It appears that what was crucial was the success of the principal in his gaining acceptance for his projected definition of the situation.

Management theory also provides insight into principal-advisory council relations, even though the council members are not in the formal line structure of management, that is, they are not subordinates to the principal as manager. However, a manager similarly is faced with a dilemma as to the

degree of involvement in decisions he should allow his subordinates. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958:95-101) present a continuum of participatory management that is influenced by the manager's discretion:

1. Manager makes decision and announces it.
2. Manager "sells" decision.
3. Manager presents ideas and invites questions.
4. Manager presents tentative decision.
5. Manager presents problem, gets suggestions, makes decision.
6. Manager defines limits; asks group to make decision.
7. Manager permits subordinates to function within limits defined by superior.

These can be considered as styles of leadership or as strategies, or getting people to do what you would like them to do in the first place.

Dyer (1972:104-108) presents a review of various types of strategists and strategies used in effecting desired outcomes. Dyer's "illusionary democratic leader" is one who suggests certain solutions to a problem and guides the group to his already implemented decision. Bradford and Lippitt's (1945) "benevolent autocrat" is one who presents himself as the wise, benign father whose wisdom and experience provide the rationale for his making the decisions or who thus protects himself from adverse reaction. Gouldner's (1950:644-

659) "pseudo-Gemeinschaft" strategy is utilized by the leader who institutes a camaraderie relationship with his subordinates so as to use the group cohesiveness as a basis for coercion. In addition, subordinates are kept busy with tasks that are irrelevant or unimportant. The Blake-Mouton "managerial facade" (1964:192-212) is a strategy used by a leader who may "feel out positions and achieve commitments from those concerned, prior to assemblying them." Decision-making groups are composed of allies so that the outcome of group discussion is ensured prior to the group's formation. Lawrence's (1954) "phony proposer" offers two proposals, one containing an obvious flaw, so that the group will feel achievement even though choosing the proposer's desired proposal. Dyer also presents the "public praiser" who is an authoritarian leader but concomitantly is one who promulgates praise for his assistants, thus preventing criticism from these same assistants. Another strategy presented by Dyer is the "impotent committee" used by the leader who either "cools out" the group's efforts or stacks the committee with allies so as to ensure acceptance of his program.

All of the above-mentioned strategies are involved with impression management and were thus incorporated into the research design.

Research Design

Data gathering consisted of administering interview

schedules and questionnaires to a sample of principals, teachers, and other district employees, as well as to students, advisory council members, and other community members in Los Angeles. Advisory councils of over thirty-five schools were involved in this study. An assessment of principals' methods--their techniques of impression management--was based on subjective criteria: the audience's (e.g., advisory council members') descriptions of principal behavior; the principals' descriptions of their own behavior; and the interviewer's assessment of the principals' behavior based upon the above reports and first-hand observation of their behavior during advisory council meetings. Also used were such objective indicators as the degree to which the principals participate in the writing of the agenda as well as such subjective indicators as the extent to which the principal appears to support verbally without substantially following through with council recommendations.

Operationalized, the existence of principals making use of strategies for attempting to sustain a shared definition with the council of his being the legitimate authority to make decisions and/or influence the council members' understanding of their actual involvement in decision-making was determined according to the following hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 1. Principals will work to sustain a shared definition of their role in decision-making by:
>
> a. developing a high degree of in-group solidarity (Goffman's "dramaturgical loyalty," Gouldner's "pseudo-Gemeinschaft");

b. carefully planning the performance (Goffman's "dramaturgical circumspection") by:
   1. taking part in the recruitment and selection of members (Blake-Mouton's "managerial facade");
   2. discouraging active participation of council members and community in council meetings;
   3. presenting themselves as the legal, trained, and experienced competent professionals who have the legitimate responsibility to make the final decisions and avoiding a presentation of facts (Goffman's "mystification," Bradford and Lippitt's "benevolent autocrat");
   4. limiting length and occurrence of council meetings.

c. discouraging active participation of council members in council meetings.

Hypothesis 2. Principals will work to project an image of "meaningful" council involvement in decision-making by:

a. controlling the agenda of topics with which the council is involved;
b. designating minor, though assumedly major, tasks to the advisory council or to certain members (Gouldner's "pseudo-Gemeinschaft" and Dyer's illusionary democratic leader");
c. controlling the advisory council members' access to information external to the interaction, such as, communication with the District or Area Superintendent or Board members;
d. controlling the advisory council members' access to information with regard to the operations of the school;
e. misrepresenting their attitudes toward council involvement by creating false impressions as to acceptance of council recommendations through strategic ambiguity, inuendos and crucial omissions (Lawrence's "phony proposal");
f. granting symbolic involvement in making decisions, or "tokenism"--by accepting council recommendations on minor matters for themselves;
g. "commissioneering," by setting up committees to investigate problems and make recommendations and in the mean time, letting time lapse without having to directly deal with the problem (Dyer's "impotent committee").

This research was conducted so as to establish, rather than to explain, the existence of a social phenomenon (Merton, 1959). Specifically, the focus of the research was to establish the existence of the use of techniques of impression management by principals in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Results

Data collected suggest that principals in Los Angeles conceive of the role of the principal to be that of legitimate decision-maker in the school while acknowledging that advisory council members may not now or in the future concur with the principal's conceptions and hence may challenge the principal's role in decision-making. Because of the potential source of challenge held by the advisory council, the data suggest that principals in Los Angeles do utilize techniques of impression management in order to get and maintain acceptance of their conceptions by advisory council members. The data also suggest that variance in principals' utilization of impression management techniques may be explained by variation in the nature of and degree of potential or real challenge to the authority of the principal as perceived by the principals. The data suggest certain conditions under which principals are likely to utilize impression management techniques to a greater extent than do other principals. These above generalizations will be discussed in this section.

All principals interviewed emphasized the appropriateness of the principal, rather than the advisory council, as the legitimate decision-maker in the school. Generally, the advisory council is perceived of as a mandated lay group, which lacks the training and experience to be a viable part of the decision-making process in the school. Typical of principals' comments were the following, made by the principal of a white-middle-class junior high school.

> We're the professionals; we've been trained. They can put in their advice, opinions, and so forth, but the decision should lie with the person who has the responsibility--the school administrator.

Even so, the council's presence can be neutralized if it adheres to its appropriate role, which is to support, rather than to challenge, the authority of the principal and the programs and teachers of the school. The council can even be an asset to the principal if it petitions support for the principal and the school to the School Board or area or district administration.

However, the council can be a liability if it overtly challenges the authority of the principal. In any case, principals recognize that the council's presence is a potential source of challenge and one which must be taken into consideration in the principals' relations with their councils. A principal describes the problem:

> They say the advisory council should be involved but that you're the final authority. It's difficult to get their opinions and then not use their opinions. It has the potential for a lot of problems.

Even though many principals have not been faced with overt challenge to their authority, they are aware of situations in which some of their colleagues have been faced with this problem and, thus, are themselves open to potential challenge. Acceptance of their conceptions of their role is not a priori guaranteed; thus, the council's presence represents a potential source of challenge to the authority of all principals.

The council's presence concomitantly represents a potential threat to the principal's career if overt conflict were to erupt at the school. Principals are aware that several of their colleagues have been transferred to other schools when they were unable to demonstrate leadership in cooling community conflict and hostility directed at the school or at the principal, himself. Principals recognize that parents have been known to become enraged when they have been unable to participate in decision-making, and thus, face this difficult situation of placating parents while still retaining control of the decision-making process.

Those principals who at present are not faced with conflict in their relations with their advisory councils still face the possibility of a similar occurrence. Thus, the data suggest that in general, principals in Los Angeles, aware of potential advisory council challenge to their authority, utilize various techniques of impression management in order to resolve a tenuous situation.

Techniques of Impression Management

All principals involved in the study, as reported by themselves and other participants and as observed by the researchers, made use of, to varying degrees, manipulative strategies in order to influence the impressions of advisory council members as to the principal as the legitimate decision-maker and/or the degree and nature of council involvement in decision-making.

With regard to actual techniques used by principals in managing the impressions of council members, the data suggest that those techniques as discussed in the preceding section of this paper[1] are utilized by principals involved in this study. Responses made by participants suggest that principals other than those involved in the study likewise make use of these techniques. Because of the sheer quantity of techniques observed and perceived and the limitations in terms of length of this paper, examples of all techniques observed will not be presented at this time.[2] Instead, that which will be discussed at this time are those techniques of impression management which were found to be the most commonly used by principals, serving to exemplify the principal as the

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[1]Pages 15-16

[2]A full discussion of these techniques will be presented in the author's dissertation and in future publications.

legitimate decision-maker in the school.[1]

THE PRINCIPAL AS LEGITIMATE DECISION-MAKER

Principals work in various ways and to varying degrees to sustain council members' impressions of the principal as the legitimate authority in the school--the person who has the expertise, experience and legal basis for making the decisions. In some instances, the principal does not have to work very hard at sustaining this impression, as members of the community generally hold this perspective a priori. This is typically the case in the middle-class, school-supportive community. However, in other instances the principal has to work harder to sustain such an impression as the community is not a priori school or principal-supportive.

Those techniques which were found to be used by a majority of principals are, in order of usage: (1) presenting themselves as the authority in relation to the council members as untrained, lay citizens; (2) preparing in advance for council meetings, such as taking part in the planning of the agenda; and (3) dominating the council meeting.

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[1]In conjunction with those techniques outlined on page 16, under Hypothesis 1b3: Principals will work to sustain a shared definition of their role in decision-making by: b. carefully planning the performance by: 3. presenting themselves as the legal, trained and experienced competent professionals who have the legitimate responsibility to make the final decisions and avoid a presentation of facts.

The Principal as Authority

Principals present themselves as the authority on school matters in many ways. One way is to be direct--to promulgate to the council the appropriate duties of the council in relation to those of the principal. A council chairman discussed this leadership initiative:

> He constantly reminds us that he's the final authority. The principal says there has to be someone at the helm. Parents aren't knowledgeable enough.

Some principals soft-pedal this stance, though still get the point across. Another council chairman discussed this reminding tactic:

> There are decisions which he feels he has to make, regardless of the reaction of the advisory council with decisions he has to make of major importance and he explains to them why he has to make them. He explains that there are a myriad of decisions everyday. When he has to make decisions about placement of children, for example, he doesn't go to the advisory council. These are mechanical decisions.

Many "mechanical decisions" are announced to the council by principals after they have been made. Members are then invited to express their opinions. A student member of a junior high school council told of this procedure:

> Mrs. _____ had it on the agenda, when she brings up the high points of what's been happening--all her "after-the-fact" decisions. She wouldn't say "I've made the decision"; she said what had happened and how all the teachers and other people wanted it.... It's usually worked out okay for her. It's been lucky for her that the advisory council and the PTA usually agree with her decisions.

In some situations, council members are not invited to express their opinions. Instead, the principal announces

"after-the-fact" decisions during a principal's section of the meeting, for example, "the principal's corner." It is during this section of the meeting that the principal "plays the part" of the authority. The principal informs the council members about the activities and problems at the school and how he, as the capable administrator, has taken care of everything so that the council need not be concerned. The school and the students are in good hands.

A council chairman discussed this procedure:

> He usually comes to us, presents something to us, and that's that. I don't think anything he presents to us makes way for differing opinions. He tells us his decision. It's not presented in a way where we could say, "Why don't we ...?"

At those council meetings which were observed by the researchers, this section was usually found near the closing of the meeting. By having it this way, the principals are planning in advance. Most principals prepare in advance for what will occur during council meetings so that their image as decision-maker will be maintained. They do this in many ways.

Preparing in advance. Some principals leave potentially conflict-laden announcements for the end. This maneuver mitigates the possibility of council challenge to the principal's decisions. A student member of a high school advisory council discussed this maneuver:

> [T]here are things we want to know that he doesn't want us to know so he brings them up at the end of the meeting where there isn't enough time.... Mr. _____ runs the advisory council. He controls the agenda.

Although the principal is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the advisory council, most principals were found to be heavily involved in the planning of the council meetings' agendas. While this maneuver was hypothesized to be one concerned with controlling the council's involvement, it was also found to be concerned with maintaining the image of the principal as the capable leader. In many cases, before the scheduled meeting the council chairman either presents an agenda to the principal for approval or the principal and chairman work together to determine the agenda. In some cases, the principal prepares the agenda and submits it to the chairman at the onset of the meeting. In some instances, the control of the agenda is more subtle. A council chairman told of what occurs at her council:

> The principal is in control of the agenda as I know nothing about what is going on in the school except for what she tells me. And she puts all the input in the meetings.

The data also suggest that most principals feel the need to plan ahead of time, to be prepared. Their image of competent professionals is more likely to be maintained if they are not caught off guard, without an appropriate answer. A council chairman told of this need for advance preparation:

> Chairman: He always wanted to know what was going to be on the agenda so he could have an answer prepared. He didn't want things to come up spontaneously.
>
> Question: What happened when it did?
>
> Chairman: He was very unhappy that he was put on the spot.

This same principal discussed his approach:

> The way I worked it was to know what they wanted and prepare for it. For example, if the subject is the budget, I have experts come and explain it.

Principals often make use of "experts." They are invited by the principal to come to the meeting to offer an explanation to the council--which usually backs up the position taken by the principal. The principal's position, substantiated by an expert, is more difficult to challenge. Principals are thus often able to present only one side of the picture. A council chairman told of this practice:

> She brought someone to speak to us presenting the School Board's viewpoint on the property tax but with no warning on the agenda so we could have another person present the opposing viewpoint.

In other situations, experts are invited in so as to avoid or reduce conflict. One principal told of a potentially volatile situation:

> I had the registrar come to the meeting to smooth things over--to be a diplomat.

At many schools, principals have suggested that the council become informed as to what is occurring at the school. Presentations are made by the teachers at every meeting, for example, the math program is presented one month, the reading program the next month, etc. That which is presented to the council is a unified, competent professional staff at the school. The students are in good hands.

Thus, the principal prepares in advance for council meetings so that the council members' impressions will be such that the principal and his staff are competent professionals. By planning his performance in advance, the principal is also able to have greater control over what occurs during the council meeting.

Dominating the meeting. A majority of principals were also found to dominate council meetings. Council members are aware of the principal's presence as the leader. This is accomplished in many ways.

At times, the principal plans and executes the agenda, and in doing so, entirely takes over the meeting. At one meeting observed, the principal told the observer before the start of the meeting:

> It's going to be my meeting, not theirs. I have a lot of things to go over with them.

The principal decided when the meeting should start, asked the chirman to call the meeting to order, and proceeded to announce:

> I have several things I'd like to inform the advisory council about for their consideration and approval.

He then listed the agenda items on the chalkboard.

Often principals not only control the agenda, but also the adherence to the agenda at the meetings. The following excerpts from a transcript of a council meeting illustrate:

Principal: So, could we skip number 3 for a while and substitute, instead, the goal-setting. [Principal passed out papers.] The final result of the goal-setting that we were all involved with--how many people were here that rainy night, Mrs. _____ (Chairman)?

Chairman: About 15 to 25.

Principal: Supposedly, we're supposed to present to the Superintendent this list plus our ideas on how to accomplish the goals and program objectives. Now, frankly, I don't think we have the time to do it. Other councils are, but we don't have to.... I would suggest that we have a committee made up of students, parents, faculty and administrators to write up a statement. We don't have a meeting before March 30, but we do on April 1 so we could be a couple of days late, so we could take a couple of minutes to set up what a small committee should do. I submit this....

Chairman: Would anyone like to put this on a proposal?

Member: I don't understand where this is on the agenda.

Principal: It isn't. But we're sort of skipping around.

Chairman: Since we don't have a quorum, we can't vote on it anyway. And Mr. _____ (Principal), I would like to talk to Mr. _____ before we decide on this.

Principal: All right, but if you don't have a committee I'll have no choice but to get together some of the staff to come up with something.

The above narrative also illustrates the influence the principal can have in retaining control of the council activities. The principal knows what is going on. In a majority of cases, the principal sits at the head table, which assists in the projection of his image as the natural leader. Members often address themselves to the principal, rather than to the chairman.

The data suggest that a majority of principals do monopolize the advisory council meetings. In doing so, they project the image of the capable, experienced professional who is a leader and is the one to whom council members should address themselves.

Variance in Impression Management Techniques

The data suggest that the use of impression management techniques varies. While the variance was not pursued in this study, the data suggest that it may be explained by the presence of such conditions as the level of community and council support for the principal, socio-economic status (SES) of the community, leadership ability of the council chairman, cohesiveness of the council itself, career contingencies[1] and personality and leadership style of the principal. It is suggested here that explanation of the variance be pursued in future research endeavors.

That which the data suggests as a most crucial factor is the level of council support[2] for the principal.

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[1]See Hughes (1968) for a discussion of "career contingencies" or those factors which influence mobility between different positions.

[2]While council support was measured directly by interview and questionnaire items, community support was not, except by the stated impressions of council members and principals as to the support in the community.

Based on observations of principal-council interactions and on comments made by respondents, it is suggested here that principals whose councils and communities are supportive of their authority to make final decisions and of the teachers and the programs in their schools, appear to engage in impression management techniques to a lesser degree than do those whose councils and communities are less supportive and are even challenging of the principal, teachers, and school programs.

As an example from the first case, the principal at a white middle-class elementary school, whose council and community have provided support for the school and principal, makes very little use of impression management. The advisory council members generally support her decisions and have not, as of yet, challenged any programs or policies. At council meetings she has urged the council to become more involved in making decisions than the members have felt it necessary. The council chairman is the leader of the council, while the principal is the resource, ex-officio member. In contrast, as an example from the second case, the principal at an integrated high school, whose council and community have provided challenge to the school and the principal, makes a great deal of use of impression management. At council meetings he blocks attempts by the community to become more involved in decision-making. For example, he

cites district regulations that hinder their involvement. He also structures the agenda and by doing so selects which topics arise for discussion. He, rather than the chairman, is the leader of the council.

Even many of those principals who are fortunate enough to have supportive councils and communities still appear to perceive a potential challenge and thus use defensive practices to ensure continued support. Principals recognize this situation now, as perhaps they did not in the past, particularly in the lower-income minority community. Minority parents and community leaders have become more vocal in recent years and have not been as willing to accept failure on the part of their children. They have not been as reticent to make the school staff aware of their grievances. This is not to say that this situation has occurred at all lower income and minority schools. However, even those principals who have not encountered community and/or council challenge to their authority, are aware of problems which their colleagues have encountered. Comments made by a principal at a predominantly chicano junior high school represent these principals:

> Minority conflict with the establishment has happened at all schools. We're just waiting our turn for it to happen with the advisory council here.

This principal serves as a gatekeeper to school information and does not encourage participation by the community. If

the council chairman fails to organize meetings, the meetings are postponed.

The data suggest that those principals who are more likely to utilize techniques of impression management to a great extent are those who perceive to a greater degree a potential challenge to their authority. These principals are more likely to be serving in schools whose communities and councils are less school- and principal-supportive than are other communities and councils. The data further suggest that principals who serve in schools in low-income, minority communities are more likely to encounter real or perceive of potential challenge to their authority than are those principals who serve in schools in middle-income communities. However, upper-income communities with a large proportion of professional persons serving on the advisory council have been found to provide challenge to the principal's authority.

Conclusion

The above discussed examples are some of the techniques of impression management which the data suggest are used by principals in Los Angeles in their relations with their advisory councils. These techniques were found to be commonly used by most principals although to varying degrees. The data further suggest that variance in principal use of impression management techniques is found to exist, depending upon the degree of community and council support for the principal's conceptions of his role in decision-making.

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